ERIC Document Resume	See Instruction Sheet	DATE OF RESUME 8/19/65	DATE RECEIVED

A. PUBLICATION DATA

1. ERIC NUMBER	2. ORIGINATOR CONTROL NO(S).	3. IDENTIFICATION NO.	DO NOT WRITE IN SPACE BELOW
ED000622	R2 p.4		

4. AUTHOR(S):
West, Joe H.

5. TITLE OF DOCUMENT ABSTRACTED:
The Comparative Merits of the Quarter and the Semester Systems

6. PUBLICATION TITLE:
N.A.

7. EDITOR(S):
N.A.

8. PLACE OF ORIGIN
ORG. San Jose State College
ST.
CITY, STATE San Jose 14, California
TELE. EXT.
INST/LOC CODE

9. PUBLISHER OR SOURCE
San Jose State College

10. VOL.	11. PAGES	12. MO./YR.	13. TOTAL PP.
N.A.	N.A.	53	

MICROFILM COPY AVAILABLE
YES ☒ NO ☐

COPYRIGHT GRANTED
YES ☐ NO ☒

COPYRIGHT RELEASE FILED
YES ☐ NO ☐

TYPE OF REPORT
PROPOSAL ☐
IN-PROGRESS ☐
FINAL ☒
FOLLOW-UP ☐

OTHER ERIC REFERENCES:

ERIC SATELLITE CODE

B. INDEXING DATA

14. SUBJECT AREA	15. TYPE OF ENDEAVOR
	report

16. INDEXING TERMS (6-12)

school year				

17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

Committee report on divergent opinions on pros and cons of semester nd quarter systems. Views too diverse for any recommendations to be proposed.

ERIC No.

18. SOURCE OF ABSTRACT

C. FUNDING DATA

19. SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION	20. DIVISION OR DEPT.	21. CONTRACT NO. / PROJECT NO.
	22. TOTAL COST OF PROJECT	
	23. DURATION OR PROJECT	U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Office of Education

ERIC Form 1

Office of the
Dean of the College

SAN JOSE STATE COLLEGE
November 24, 1953

"THE COMPARATIVE MERITS OF THE
QUARTER AND THE SEMESTER SYSTEMS"

The committee which President Wahlquist appointed in February 1953 to investigate the comparative merits of the quarter and the semester systems has not found its assignment a simple one. It was not entirely unexpected, in the light of previous studies that have been made, that it would be difficult to arrive at anything close to unanimous agreement with respect to a recommendation. The committee hardly anticipated, however, so much divergence of opinion on most issues. On most questions, for every person arguing in favor of one system, there is an equally ardent advocate for the other system. While many of the arguments are over relatively minor points, some of them would be most significant if there were any proof that one or the other system was better.

For example, from the standpoint of the psychology of learning, if it could be shown definitely that one system is better than the other, this would have a great deal of significance in determining the recommendations of the committee. It was found, however, that opinion is pretty well divided from the point of view of the learning process. The issues concerned in spaced versus mass practice do not seem to be too relevant, but with perhaps some slight advantage to the semester system. There is some evidence that time is important in learning, just as it is in growing; that additional material permits more reflection on an integration of additional material. There does seem to be something in the nature of a maturing process that goes on during periods of rest. Any possible advantage accruing from this factor does favor the semester system. From the point of view of interest and motivation, however, there seems to be a slight preference for the quarter system. That is, with more frequent meetings perhaps it is easier to maintain interest in a given course.

One of the arguments that has been given for the quarter system is that it results in a few large unit courses, and therefore the student takes fewer courses at a time with more frequent meetings. Others contend that the College has never realized fully on this possibility, since our students probably take as many courses as students attending semester-system colleges. In this connection, it is sometimes pointed out that most texts have been written with the semester system in mind, which sometimes makes them a little difficult to use under the quarter system.

With respect to the frequency of the offering of a course, there seem to be arguments each way. In the case of courses offered twice a year only, or which need to be offered each term without regard to size of section, there is some advantage under the semester plan. It is pointed out, however, that the quarter plan provides more opportunity for the student to work a given course into his schedule. Others say that while this is true, the quarter schedule becomes slightly more complicated too.

As already pointed out, in theory semester courses meet fewer times per week than quarter courses. While this has some advantage, perhaps from the point of view of interest, the quarter system does provide little

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
Office of Education

This document has been reproduced exactly as received from the person or organization originating it. Points of view or opinions stated do not necessarily represent official Office of Education position or policy.

ED000622

chance of courses of less than three-unit denomination. A change to the semester system would result in a few one-term courses, such as History of Education, being changed from three times per week to two times per week. This permits some more use of Tuesday and Thursday, and would tend to aid in balancing student, teaching, and room loads.

From the point of view of the amount of work involved, it would, of course, be simpler to make two schedules a year instead of three. Although it does make greater demands on the counseling and advisory staffs, particularly in course advisement, the quarter system does lend itself to more frequent student-counselor contacts.

The arguments concerning the points already mentioned are so lacking in anything approaching unanimity that the committee feels it would be difficult to base a recommendation on them, and that in the long run they probably offset one another.

There are two areas, however, where the arguments appear to be quite definite and on which there is considerable agreement. One is concerned with the arrangement for practice work. The Education Department feels very strongly that the twelve-week, full-time assignment for directed teaching is far superior to any arrangement under the semester system. There is also a physical problem under the semester system, in that part-time student teaching with classes taken on campus concurrently would necessitate placing all student teachers in the San Jose area, and sufficient acceptable student teaching situations are not available locally. The committee realizes the validity of this viewpoint. The full-time assignment has a lot of merit. We have not completely come to it for the general secondary nor in a few instances for the special secondary, but the majority of our practice teachers are on a full-time basis. Six additional weeks of full-time directed teaching on the semester basis would not seem to pay dividends, and would also make it difficult to include all other courses in a four-year program. However, one unexpected advantage of the semester system in this respect has come to light recently. Our staffing formula requests for 1954-55 have been cut by over seven faculty members needed for supervision. In the past we have been able to have our supervision requests multiplied by 3/2 in order to accommodate the difference between semester and quarter schools. It was not possible to continue this difference in budgeting for 1954-55. Some Education Department heads in the other state colleges also believe there is some advantage to having student teachers see the beginning and end of semesters in the public schools.

The Education Departments in the other colleges were contacted for their reactions on the subject. While it is probably difficult for a person to be entirely objective in such a situation, (all the reports were from semester system colleges) it is interesting to note that from the point of view of directed teaching, five indicated preference for the semester system, two for the quarter system, and one said possibly the quarter system. Insofar as a general preference could be determined from their reports, - that is, not limited just to the practice teaching arrangement, - three seemed to prefer the semester system; two the quarter; and three were noncommittal. From the point of view of placement for practice work, there seems to be some advantage to the Business Division under the quarter plan. The Journalism Department also likes the quarter system, as an 18-week,

full-time assignment is too long and would complicate their four-year sequence considerably. The Nursing Education, Occupational Therapy, and Police Departments indicated no preference.

The other area in which there seems to be a definite advantage in favor of one system and on which there seemed to be rather full agreement, is administration. While throughout our discussions it was reiterated that instructional advantages are more important than administrative convenience, there are a number of ways in which the semester system would simplify the operation of the College. Two registrations a year instead of three would, of course, save time and inconvenience. It would permit two extra days of instruction now given to a third registration. It would save cost of student assistants and in the printing of registration books and schedules of courses. Record keeping is, of course, a larger job under the quarter system. Posting the quarter program, for example, has to be done three times a year instead of two, and we have only 12 weeks instead of 18 in which to do the job. Under our present system there are a number of things that have to be done three times a year instead of two. We now spend 12 days a year for final examinations, whereas the semester system would require only eight. In case of a change, instruction would gain four days. Here again, some additional reader assistance is involved, in addition to the extra burden on the Testing Office. It was pointed out, however, that practically all semester colleges spend more than eight days annually on examinations.

There is something to be said for the semester system in articulation with other schools and colleges. The high schools and junior colleges are on the semester system, and mid-year graduates have to wait until the spring quarter to register here. This sometimes works a hardship in the case of draft deferments and athletic eligibility. The San Jose City schools have given up the mid-year plan, however. From the point of view of state-wide record keeping, budgeting, and the like, there would be some advantage in our having the same calendar as the other colleges. It has already been pointed out that the amount of administrative work is considerably more under the quarter system, and this is especially true of the clerical staff in the Admissions, Registrar's, Business, and Personnel Offices. The college has never been staffed on the basis of the quarter system, and the Department of Finance has indicated that they will want rather definite proof that the quarter system is superior, in order to provide the extra staff. Currently San Jose is the least well staffed with clerical and technical positions from the standpoint of the ratio to full-time students.

From the point of view of the calendar, many people prefer to end a term at Christmas, as we do under the quarter system, than to come back three weeks after Christmas before ending the term. Major sports tend to divide themselves into three quarter breaks, and the Athletic Department prefers the present system on that account. The Business Division also believes that the quarter system allows for better business placement, our majors finishing at Christmas or the first of the year. There seems to be no particular advantage for either system so far as use of the facilities is concerned.

The opinion of the faculty was secured by distribution of a questionnaire. At the outset it was pretty well agreed that the decision should not be made on the basis of a faculty vote, as certain arguments need to be weighed according to their importance in relation to the instructional program. Actually, the semester system was favored about two to one. (Sometimes it appears that a person comes by his preference on the subject even more vaguely than his choice of politics or religion.) Faculty members did mention, however, that the semester system requires less time for starting and stopping and therefore allows more time for content. Also, there is more time to recover from an illness or a late start, and there is more opportunity for getting acquainted. This is not a one-sided argument at all, as some of the advocates of the quarter system gave almost the same replies. It was pointed out that under the quarter system, a person who makes a bad start does not have to wait so long to make a new start.

It is believed by advocates of both sides that if the quarter system is continued, some effort should be made to equalize the quarters in time, for having quarters of varying lengths is a distinct disadvantage.

It is the opinion of the committee that a more detailed study of many aspects of the problem would not put them in a better position to make a definite recommendation. It is their opinion, therefore, that this report be submitted to the President without a definite recommendation. In accordance with the wishes of the Committee, the subcommittee reports and materials are enclosed as they contain some details not given in the main report.

Respectfully submitted,

James C. DeVoss
Fred F. Harcleroad
Jack H. Holland
G. A. McCallum
Viola Palmer
William G. Sweeney (Division Chairmen's Council)
Charles W. Telford (" " ")
Edward S. Thompson
Glen Guttormsen
Joe H. West, Chairman